

Call for Papers

23rd Annual Meeting of the British Women Writers Conference: “Relations”

June 25th-27th, 2015

The Graduate Center of the City University of New York



Relations

The British Women Writers Conference will engage the theme of “Relations” for its 23rd annual meeting to be held in New York City. The inspiration for this theme comes from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who taught at the Graduate Center from 1998-2009, and whose investment in relations continues to reverberate both within our department and in the field at large. One of her last courses, “Reading Relations,” explored literary constructions and alternative understandings of relationality [link to the syllabus forthcoming]. In this spirit, we invite papers—as well as panel proposals—that focus on possible interpretations of and approaches to relationality, broadly conceived. We welcome investigations of interaction, exchange, correlation, or conjunction. Alternately, treatments might focus on relationality as a political, historical, global, social, personal, critical or textual phenomenon.

For paper proposals, please send a 300-word abstract and a short bio (in a single attachment) to bwwc2015@gmail.com by January 15th, 2015. For full panel proposals, please compile all proposals, along with a brief rationale for the panel, into a single document. Papers and panels must address the theme and its application to British women’s literature of the long 18th- or 19th-centuries.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

Conceptual Relations:

Influence (literary or otherwise)
Subject-Object relations
Human-Animal relations
Human-Machine relations
Darwinian relations
Affect
Connection
Complementarity
Synthesis
Affiliation
Collaboration
Spatial arrangements/Bodies in space
Communication

Critical/Textual Relations:

Theoretical approaches
Hermeneutic relations
Reader relations
Biographical relationships
Literary circles/networks
Relations between literary forms/genres/traditions/conventions
Palimpsests
Pedagogical Relations:
Pedagogical approaches
Text-Media relations
Interdisciplinarity
Adaptations

Personal Relations:

Sexual relations/Intimate relations
Interiority
Domestic arrangements
Care-giving, professional and personal
Courtship/Marriage/Divorce
Familial Relationships/Kinship
Friendship

Global Relations:

Cosmopolitanism
Economic systems
Trade
Exploration
Anthropological interactions
Social/Political Relations:
Social arrangements
Class relations
Labor relations
Gender relations
Community
Political relationships
Revolutionary relations
Colonial relations
Race relations
Cross-national/cross-cultural relations
Historical connections

Abstract: Corinne, Fanny & Mary: Objects of Desire & Power, Not Pity

“Why are girls to be told that they resemble angels; but to sink them below women? Or, that a gentle, innocent female is an object that comes nearer to the idea which we have formed of angels than any other. Yet they are told, at the same time, that they are only like angels when they are young and beautiful; consequently, it is their persons, not their virtues, that procure them this homage.” Mary Wollstonecraft

Madame de Stael established herself as a major writer in the 19th century after the publication of *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), her most critically-acclaimed novel. For literary figures like Emily Dickinson, George Eliot and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, de Stael was an influential female powerhouse; for others, like Mary Wollstonecraft, although equally influenced, raucously disagreed with the opinion of *Corinne* as an “inspirational” figure. Many critics focus on Wollstonecraft’s 1792 novel, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and discuss de Stael and her *Corinne* as what Wollstonecraft called in Chapter V, “objects of pity,” even though de Stael’s book was published almost 18 years later. While Wollstonecraft had no way of specifically referencing a novel before its creation, I believe it was de Stael, rather, that responded to Wollstonecraft’s sharp feministic views on domesticity and the literary-female’s place. Moreover, I see Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814) published another seven years after *Corinne*, as a continuation of this commentary, as well as a challenge against de Stael, suggesting Fanny Price as a “useful” and “attainable” object that thrived not through improvisation and expressiveness like *Corinne*, but through consciousness.

I would like to expand off of this comparison, not as binary, but as justification for de Stael’s conceptualization of *Corinne*, and Jane Austen’s creation of Fanny Price and Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park* (1814) and argue that de Stael and Austen used the “object” in both a figurative and literal sense to suggest their own definition of their primary “subject,” the literary female. While the two authors have never been seen as compatriots, I believe their novels work in tandem to mutually counter and represent Wollstonecraft’s feministic viewpoints, and the way the female thrives in a domesticated, patriarchal society. In the discovery of the subject and object relationship, the literal objects *Corinne* and Fanny are attached to (art, books, letters, jewelry) as well as the objects they are seen to represent (*Corinne* and the mechanical doll, Fanny as an object to be acquired) are deliberately placed to answer Wollstonecraft’s question of the “passive indolent wom[a]n” and how they “perform their part” (34).